



RETHINK TOURISM IN THE ANDAMANS

Towards building a base for sustainable tourism

Summary of Research Report

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**TOWARDS BUILDING A BASE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
JUNE 2008**



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Tourists at North Bay (courtesy - Pankaj Sekhsaria). In the background - New Wandoor Beach (courtesy - EQUATIONS)

RETHINK TOURISM IN THE ANDAMANS TOWARDS BUILDING A BASE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH REPORT June 2008

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands (A&NI) are gradually becoming a popular destination on India's tourist map with a definitive push post the tsunami of 2004 to "bring the tourists back". This has meant a slew of proposals to expand and intensify tourism in the Islands, especially the Andamans, for intensive tourism, huge investment in infrastructure, improved connectivity and concessions on LTC for domestic tourists. However, these plans, like earlier ones, are not based on how tourism operates in and impacts the Islands, and do not consider whether ground realities support the assumptions that these plans are based on.

The research report '*Rethink Tourism in the Andamans: Towards Building a Base for Sustainable Tourism*' is an analysis of the current status of tourism and proposed tourism development plans, an assessment of social, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional and policy impacts of tourism in the Islands and intends to capture the peoples' perspective on tourism in the Islands. Conceived and implemented by six collaborating organisations (EQUATIONS, INTACH Andaman & Nicobar Islands Chapter, Society for Andaman and Nicobar Ecology, Kalpavriksh, Jamsetji Tata Centre for Disaster Management - Tata Institute of Social Sciences and ActionAid International - India, A&N Unit), the report seeks to stimulate a debate on tourism development and its directions among a range of stakeholders in the Islands, with the aim of democratising tourism and making it more sustainable and equitable in its benefits.

The research study focused on the Andaman Islands alone and did not cover the Nicobars. A combination of primary and secondary data sources using both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques were used. Questionnaire surveys were administered to tourists and a range of industry sectors. In-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, were also used with them as well as those

in Administration, Local self government institutions, and local community members. Extensive secondary data was also relied on including reports of the Government of India, Andaman & Nicobar Islands Administration, UN Agencies, NGOs working in the Islands and web-based sources.

Introduction to the Andamans

The Andaman group consists of 550 islands, islets and rocks and covers a land area of 6,408 km². This group includes large islands such as the Middle Andaman, North Andaman, South Andaman, Baratang and Little Andaman, and islands in the Ritchie's Archipelago consisting of Havelock and Neil Islands among others. The Islands have a unique history, geo-political location and demographic profile that have resulted in its occupational and land-use patterns. Their ecological fragility and geological sensitivity add to this unique profile.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands harbour a rich biodiversity with high endemism, making them an internationally acknowledged hotspot for biodiversity. Large areas of coral reefs, which hold significance as the last pristine reefs in the Indian Ocean, lie outside protected areas, with very little protection efforts going into them. The mangroves are also known for their diversity of various marine organisms. Over the years, the swampy areas in lowland evergreen forests have been almost totally destroyed by conversion to agriculture and open swamps have also been drained in a number of places, making this an increasingly rare habitat. It is clear that any further ecological degradation will have an adverse impact not only on the unique biodiversity of its fragile coastal ecosystems but also on coastal fisheries and tourism.

In the Andamans, forests cover 89.2 percent of the total geographical area. Currently, 14 per cent of the land is revenue land and is used for human settlements, agriculture and other human-based activities. This mostly comprises coastal areas. Almost

the entire rural and revenue areas are under category-IV of the Coastal Regulation Zone, where no development is allowed within 200m of high tide line. A part of the land has been allocated to the Navy, Army and the Air Force. Within a span of 50 years, from 1951 to 2001, the population of the Islands has risen ten times from 30,971 to 3,56,152. Within the same period, the density of population has increased from 5 to 43 persons per sq km. However, given that the land mass available for human habitation in the Islands is significantly less, the capacity of small island systems to absorb such high human density needs to be seriously considered in the light of increasing migration trends.

Demographically as well, the Islands have a unique history and profile. The Andaman Islands are home to four indigenous tribes: The Great Andamanese; the Onge, who inhabit the Little Andaman Island; the Sentinelese, who have long inhabited North Sentinel Island and the Jarawas, in the interior and west coast of South and Middle Andaman. During the British colonisation, house sites and agricultural lands were allotted to “convicts” who had been jailed at the Cellular Jail. In 1925, around 45 Karen families from Burma were brought to clear the forest. Between 1947 and 1971, as part of a policy move of the Indian Government to meet labour requirements in the Islands, people from then East Pakistan, West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar were settled in the Islands. Post 1970s, the A&NI have seen an unplanned influx of people from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, whereby the annual growth rate of this influx has far exceeded the average decadal growth of population in the Islands (approximately 4.8% p.a). Settlement and thoughtless “civilisation” attempts have lead to the decimation of the original tribal people and they are confined to reserves with uneasy relationships with the settlers. Among those who came in, the diverse profile and stakeholding has led to some tensions raising the issue ‘who belongs to the Islands and who does not’.

Status of tourism in the Andamans

The Andamans is a relatively new tourism destination in the country. But between 1981 and 2006, there has been a phenomenal rise in tourist arrivals, from less than 10,000 tourists to currently over 1,27,504 tourists in just 26 years. The increase in arrival of domestic tourists (who constitute 93% of total arrivals) has been much more steady and significant than the increase in arrival of foreign tourists (who constitute 7% of total arrivals). Correlating the tourist arrival figures with the population of the Islands, we see that

throughout the year, for every 100 persons in the Islands, there are 3 tourists! This gives an indication of the increased pressure on resources of the Islands as a result of increasing number of visitors.

Seasonality in tourism needs to be analysed to understand both the pattern of tourist arrivals into the Islands as well as its economic, social and environmental impacts. In the case of domestic tourists, there does not seem to be very high variation in the arrival of tourists in different months of the year, although there is a relative increase during the summer months and in the festival season of October-November. However, in 2006, in contrast to previous years, we saw a more significant rise in arrivals of domestic tourists from the months of August – December. This was probably on account of the increased number of travellers availing leave travel concession (LTC - a benefit extended by governmental agencies to their employees to visit either their home town or any other place of their choice with their family every two years).visiting the Islands. As a measure to boost the Islands’ tourism industry after the tsunami, the Government of India, in May 2005 issued a memorandum relaxing LTC Rules such that all central government employees could avail their LTC to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in place of their home town. It further permitted Group A and Group B government servants to avail of this facility via air from either Kolkata or Chennai. With this relaxation, the number of LTC travellers to the Islands boomed as it permitted several employees to travel by air and see the Islands. In terms of seasonality in arrival of foreign tourists, the variation within the year is more significant wherein the period mid-October to end-March can be considered the peak tourist season.

In terms of the **geographic concentration of current tourism activities** in the Andamans, the capital town of Port Blair, on account of its historic significance and being the only entry point into the A&NI, sees a high number of visitors. However, our tourist survey revealed that visitation of sites within Port Blair was far higher among domestic tourists with 43.5% of foreign tourists not having visited any popular tourist spot within Port Blair town. Among other Islands, Havelock and Neil are currently the most popular, especially among foreign tourists, probably due to their relative proximity to Port Blair. The popularity of Havelock can be gauged from our tourist survey which revealed that more than 50% of foreigners visited only Havelock on their holiday, 26% Havelock and Neil and 14% Havelock and other Islands in the Andamans. Among domestic tourists, Baratang and Barren Islands, which have gained in popularity on account of unique

attractions like the limestone caves in the case of the former and the active volcano in the case of the latter, are popular. The A&NI Administration is now keen to widen the portfolio of tourist attractions in the Islands.

The **profile and typology** of both domestic and foreign tourists visiting the Andamans is interesting. In terms of age, most domestic tourists visiting the Islands fall in the age bracket of 31-40 years (28.4% of tourists) and in case of foreign tourists the predominant age group is 20-40 years (95% of tourists), of which 65% of tourists are in the 20-30 years age group. This undoubtedly has a bearing on the tourist activities undertaken as we see a greater enthusiasm for adventure sports like snorkelling, scuba diving and trekking among foreigners. The gender profile of tourists has a bearing on the socio-cultural aspects of tourism like safety and cultural impacts and is therefore important to note as well. In the Andamans, our tourist survey reveals that among domestic tourists, the male: female ratio is approximately 70:30 while in the case of foreign tourists; it is a much more balanced 45:55. This is probably indicative of the fact that Andamans is considered a fairly safe destination for women travellers. A close understanding of the country and place of origin of tourists is also required to analyse the sustainability, positioning and promotion angles of tourism. Such an analysis can also help reduce dependency on a particular market by diversifying the tourist profile.

Our tourist survey reveals that the largest numbers of foreign tourists visiting the Andaman Islands are from Israel (42.6%), followed by the British (15%), Americans (7%) and Germans (6%). Among domestic tourists, majority are travellers visiting the Islands by availing LTC and hailing from the states of Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal with a sizeable proportion also from New Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan. Among domestic visitors, not linked to LTC, a significant proportion comes from the cities of Chennai, Bangalore and Mumbai. An analysis of the typology of tourists visiting the Islands reveals that among domestic tourists, a majority fall into the “mass tourism – package tour” classification and spend time sight-seeing. This is in contrast to the average foreigner visiting the Islands, who would much prefer relaxing on the beach, swimming or participating in some ecotourism or other adventure activity rather than go sight-seeing, a large proportion of them falling in the “backpacker” category.

Our analysis of the **motivational factors for tourists** to visit the Andamans as a holiday destination revealed that majority of foreigners (75.9%) were in the Andamans on the basis of their own past experiences

or recommendations from friends. For domestic tourists, the majority (72.7%) were motivated to visit the Andamans as it was linked to availing their LTC. Regarding main attractions, 90% of both domestic and foreign tourists responded that it was the Islands' beaches that are its main attraction. In terms of what makes the Andamans different from other beach and island destinations of the world, approximately 80% of foreigners and 55% of domestic tourists responded that it is the untouched and pristine nature Islands that is the main differentiating factor. The relatively lower cost of holiday is also an important factor for domestic tourists.

Tourism Industry and Establishments in the Andaman Islands - Our survey of accommodation establishments in the Andamans reveals that most of the accommodation facilities available at the Islands are in form of the mid range or the budget hotels, resorts and lodges. The occupancy rates in 2006 according to the Andaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry were 50% in the high-end range as defined for the Islands (i.e. room tariff above Rs. 1000 / day) and 70-80% in the mid-level range (room tariff below Rs. 1000 / day). Our survey also reveals that the percentage of unregistered accommodation units is far greater outside of Port Blair than within it with 55% of units outside Port Blair in other Islands (like Havelock, Neil and Diglipur) being unregistered. The A&NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry are of the opinion that the investment in the hotel industry in Port Blair and other islands is largely a result of private investment and entrepreneurship, with very little incentive from the Administration.. The owners accommodation units are not very aware of the government policies that have come up for the development of tourism in the Islands with only 32% of those interviewed indicating that they had some information or knowledge about government policies for the sector.

The highest **concentration of the accommodation units** is in Port Blair given that it is the only entry and exit point into the Islands. Also current transport schedules make a night stay in Port Blair mandatory. In other Islands, concentration of accommodation units follows the pattern of tourist arrivals into Islands and is therefore highest in Havelock, followed by Neil Island. While Baratang receives a lot of tourists, it does not have any accommodation units as all tourists make day trips and the itinerary has not required night stay. The increasing competition in the accommodation sector has led to the introduction of new facilities and services provided by units. While some hotels have invested in improving facilities like conference and

banquet halls, the majority of accommodation units still provide only basic facilities and services. Also, there are significant numbers of units that are still not offering services like currency exchange, credit card payments and internet access which could be an important requirement especially for international tourists. On the issue of making bookings at establishments, it is observed that use of telephone was a prominent means of booking among establishments in Port Blair and other Islands. On-arrival bookings are much higher in other Islands than in Port Blair while booking through tour operators is much higher in the case of Port Blair. Foreign tourists, who do not spend much time in Port Blair, but mostly head straight for other Islands especially Havelock, and rely on accommodation being available on arrival without pre-booking. But domestic tourists, who largely come through package tours, arranged by tour operators and spend considerable time in Port Blair usually pre-book. The facility of internet bookings has still not evolved in the Islands.

Regarding **information sources to tourists on places of accommodation** in the Islands, among domestic tourists, not surprisingly travel agents (48%) and Tourist Information Centre (25%) are important sources of information. The internet (38%), Lonely Planet (22%) and word of mouth (60%) are the most important sources of information for foreign tourists. While discussing factors that influence the tourists' choice of a particular place of stay in the Islands, cleanliness and 'a good view' were rated the most important deciding factors by both domestic and foreign tourists. Our survey reveals that tourist satisfaction levels regarding accommodation facilities in the Islands are satisfactory, with foreign and domestic tourists seeming more or less content with services offered. There was, however, dissatisfaction expressed on the parameters of recreational services and tour operator services offered by establishments.

With regard to **food and restaurant facilities**, we note that on a general level, the food and restaurant business in Port Blair has improved significantly in recent years with many new restaurants, even those specialising in specific cuisines (like Chinese food or sea food) coming up. However, in Islands other than Port Blair, the availability of a variety of food cuisines is restricted by connectivity and price factors. There are no speciality restaurants and tourists looking for speciality cuisine would have to go to one of the few high-end resorts. The responses from tourists on how they would like the restaurants in the Islands to improve indicates that the predominant demand of foreign tourists (51%) is that the pricing of food needs to be

improved – an indicator that they are find the price of food high. Among domestic tourists, nearly 60% seek an improvement in hygiene standards and 53% in service at restaurants.

The role of **travel agencies and tour operators in the Islands** applies largely in the context of domestic tourists as the majority of foreign tourists do not visit through tour operators but design their own tours. Tour operators organising for the Andamans are based both in the mainland (cities like Kolkata, Delhi) and in Port Blair. Our primary survey in Port Blair indicates that the number of functional tour operators is close to 70. While most tourists have rated the performance of tour operators as average, among the services offered "information on place" and "overall organisation of tour" have received a relatively poor rating by tourists. This could be interpreted either as a response to the quality of information about the particular sightseeing attraction or showing a certain keenness on the part of tourists to learn more about the Andaman Islands, which could certainly be improved.

Supporting Infrastructure to tourism in the Andaman Islands- transportation and connectivity

Air transport - earlier, the Islands were connected to the mainland mainly by sea route, air travel being limited to one flight a day. But, with the boom in the domestic aviation sector, connectivity to the Islands by air has greatly improved and that has facilitated the increase in tourist arrivals to the Islands. Today travel by air is the most popular means of arrival into the Islands. Currently 11 daily flights ply to Port Blair from Kolkata and Chennai. The growth in the number of daily flights has matched the increase in tourist arrivals, especially since the year 2005. Among the different airlines, Air Deccan is the most popular among foreign tourists while Indian Airlines, Jet Airways and Deccan are equally used by domestic tourists. There are proposals to increase the number of ports connecting Port Blair to the mainland, both nationally and internationally. Our survey results also indicate that 33% of domestic and 30% of foreign tourists experienced difficulties in getting air tickets and that 11% of domestic and 40% of foreign tourists did not find the current flight timings convenient. The response from tourists regarding aspects of air transport to the Islands that they would like to be improved are in favour of having more daily flights to the Islands and connectivity to more Indian cities. The A&NI Island Administration and Directorate of Civil Aviation have also begun renting out helicopters for use by tourists to get to popular islands like

Havelock. The Directorate is planning to increase capacity and get two more helicopters to cater to the increasing tourist demand.

Sea transport - a very low percentage of tourists arrive into the Islands by ship as it takes much longer. However, inter-Island travel in the Islands is practically completely dependent on boats. The Directorate of Shipping currently has 16 boats that ply in the foreshore sector. However, by its own admission, the Directorate believes that it cannot even meet the needs of Islanders, let alone tourists, and post tsunami, their priorities clearly lie in meeting local connectivity needs, relief and rehabilitation. The Directorate states that ships are being run at highly subsidised rates that also benefit tourists. Therefore, despite the Directorate encouraging private boat operators to cater specifically to the tourists, private investment has not been forthcoming, competing with Government-subsidised ship service would be unprofitable. There is serious consideration being given to the development of the Andaman Islands as a cruise tourism destination. In order to create adequate space and facilities for docking, the Port Management Board is operationalising a proposal of re-vamping the Port Blair Harbour and jetty. Media reports indicate that the A&NI Administration, Department of IP&T, itself is going to start operating a cruise liner by the end of 2008 from the Andaman Islands to Malaysia and Thailand. Many state governments have also come forward with plans to develop cruise tourism involving the Andamans. A CRISIL Limited study for the MoT, proposes development of the Andamans as a potential cruise destination for the country.

Institutional Framework: roles of various institutions at different levels influencing tourism development in the Andamans

The current institutional and governance framework for tourism development in the Andaman is complex and multi-layered. Being a Union Territory, direction and financial support for tourism development largely comes from the Centre, while responsibility for implementation rests with the relevant departments of the A&NI Administration. Other national and international bodies have also influenced tourism development in the Islands. The level of coordination between different departments within the A&NI Administration on tourism issues is quite low. At the grassroots level, despite a long history of local self governance and a progressive Panchayat Act, the involvement of the panchayats and the Municipality in planning for and implementation of tourism is very low.

Among **central-level institutions**, the Ministry of Home Affairs is the nodal Ministry for all matters of union territories relating to legislation, finance and budget services. The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) is the nodal agency guiding and supporting tourism development in the Islands and has been aiding promotion of the Islands under its 'Incredible India Campaign'. Apart from these, the Island Development Authority (IDA) was instituted as an independent body to formulate policies and programmes for an ecologically sound, sustainable and integrated development of the Islands. Besides the MoT, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has direct jurisdiction and administration over the protected areas and the entire coast of the A&NI. Any activity within these areas, including tourism, needs the direct approval of the Ministry. In recent years, the Ministry has pitched into promoting ecotourism.

There are a range of **departments and bodies within the A&NI Administration** whose activities and mandates have a bearing on tourism and its regulation in the Islands. Of these various departments, the Department of Information, Publicity and Tourism (IP&T) is the nodal agency that is supposed to coordinate with central-level agencies and all other departments of the A&NI Administration on issues related to tourism. The vision of the Tourism Department is "to exploit to the maximum the natural beauty and beaches of the Andamans Islands to promote tourism". The Department believes that tourism has significant potential for revenue generation for the A&NI Administration and employment for Islanders. The forest area of the Islands (reserved and protected) directly comes under the jurisdiction of the Department of Forests, which is responsible for conservation of this area. The Department has also undertaken some 'ecotourism' activities which are permissible in the Protected Areas of the Islands. The responsibility of preserving of the way of life of the Primitive Tribal Groups lies with the Department of Social Welfare and Tribal Welfare. Its present mandate is to limit, to the best possible extent, the interaction of tourists with the non-tribals. There was a trend of "Jarawa tourism" that was on rise along the Andaman Trunk Road which the Administration has taken a clear position on prohibiting.

The Directorate of Civil Aviation is concerned with the regulation and use of air transport services within the territory of the A&NI, which largely involves the use of its fleet of helicopters and fixed wing aircrafts. As part of government policy, the helicopters service is run at highly subsidised rates and therefore the revenue generation from renting helicopters out to

tourists, (which is done occasionally) is negligible. As far as the Directorate of Shipping goes, its priority is to ensure that the needs of Islanders for their inter-island movement and supply of their basic necessities is met. Tourism comes only next. However, there is constant pressure on the Directorate from the Tourism Department to cater more to the needs of tourists. The Directorate is coordinating directly with the central Ministry of Shipping in the purchase of new ships, improvement of shipping services in the Islands and even discussing policy initiatives like the privatisation of shipping services in certain sectors of the Islands. The safety in the Islands and issuing of Restricted Area Permits to foreign tourists is taken care of by the Department of Police.

Apart from the above listed departments, two **other public institutions** currently involved in tourism activities in the Islands are ANIIDCO (Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation) and the ANIFPDL (Andaman and Nicobar Islands Forests and Plantation Development Corporation). ANIIDCO, incorporated in 1988 has chief areas of operation in the sectors of Fisheries, Tourism, Finance, Industry and Supplies. As part of its tourism activities, ANIIDCO currently runs a three star hotel and two restaurants. ANIIDCO's future plans in tourism include developing a shopping complex on a 10,000 sq. metres property in Port Blair that is to also house a three-star hotel and developing their 48 acre beach-front property on Havelock Island. The ANIFPDL, incorporated in 1977 with the main objective of developing and managing the inaccessible forests in Little and North Andaman has, in recent years begun venturing into tourism, especially ecotourism activities.

With regard to **international organisations**, specifically in the context of the Andaman Islands, only the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) and the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) have been active on tourism, primarily through the MoT commissioned "*Development Strategy for Environmentally Sustainable Tourism in the Andamans*" (UNDP/WTO Project IND/93/032) (April 1997).

Governance framework in the A&NI and implications for tourism - the administrative identity of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a "Union Territory" as against a "State" means that it is directly under the administration of the Central Government.. After Independence the Union Constitution Committee in its Report Submitted on October 21, 1947 favoured direct administration of Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the Centre. However, the term "Union Territories"

was phrased in the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 which stated that the administrative head of a UT is an Administrator as an agent of the President and not a Governor acting as the head of the state. Legislatively, Article 246 (4) of the Constitution grants exclusive legislative power over a Union Territory to Parliament. However, in the case of select UTs, the President has got legislative power, namely, to make regulations for the peace, progress and good government of these territories. Being directly under the administration of the central government, directives for development and funds for the same come from New Delhi and are implemented by the A&NI Administration headed by the Lieutenant Governor. Though, many successive government bodies have strongly supported the need for constituting an Assembly in the Islands, even with no elected government at the federal level, the Islands do have a strong history and identity of local self governance institutions.

Local self government in the Islands- The A&NI Panchayats (Regulation) Act 1994 provides a wide range of powers to all three levels of institutions of local self governance – the Grama Panchayat, the Panchayat Samiti and the Zilla Parishad. As per the Act, the Grama Panchayat has the authority to prepare plans for economic and social justice, vis-à-vis sanitation and health, public works, education and culture, self defence and village defence, planning and administration, community development, agriculture, preservation of forests and pasture lands and, animal husbandry. It also levies a wide range of taxes. In extension to the powers and functions of the Grama Panchayat, the other two tiers of the system have also been vested with similar and in certain cases greater powers. There is also the Port Blair Municipal Council that is responsible for providing basic urban services, provision of civic amenities, maintenance of public assets, etc. In the context of tourism, it has important functions like ensuring adequate water supply for the residents of Port Blair and the tourists, putting in place appropriate building bye-laws for construction of hotels, resorts and other related structures, and proper disposal of sewage and solid waste generated.

Currently, the role of PRIs in respect to development of tourism in the Islands is minimal. The Zilla Parishad does not have special funds allocated for tourism but uses grant money to construct support infrastructure like roads, public toilets and provision of drainage facilities at tourist spots. At the local village level, the Panchayat is only approached for provision of building clearance to any enterprise, including tourism establishments like hotels, resorts and shacks, on the

Island. All other clearances and permissions are sought from Port Blair directly giving very little room for the position and influence of the panchayat. In few important tourism areas like Havelock, Neil, Baratang, Wandoor and so on, panchayats run guest houses that are let out to tourists and are indirectly involved in other activities like clearing garbage from tourist spots and maintaining roads. Apart from these initiatives, there is little decision-making or influencing by panchayats on tourism development matters in the Islands.

On a general note, the process of delegation of powers and functions to PRIs has been very slow in the A&NI as noted in the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs. Consequently, the Committee, recommended that local bodies may be delegated more powers and functions without further delay so that they can meet the people's aspirations. Further the Committee recommends that these bodies should be supported by adequate staff, finance and other logistics. There have also been a series of observations and recommendations made by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI in a Joint Resolution of March 2007 on how to specifically improve functioning of PRIs in the UT.

Policy Framework for developing tourism in the Andamans - many policies and studies have been undertaken to determine the direction and pace of tourism in the Islands. Of these two – the A&NI Tourism Policy 2003 and the A&NI Tourism Vision Statement (2002-2027) have been prepared by official authorities while the others are commissioned studies/reports. The *Tourism Policy 2003*, for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a rather simplistic document serving very little of its purpose of providing guideline and principles for implementation of tourism in the Islands. The *Tourism Vision (2003-2027)* outlines a series of vision targets for tourism spread over four terms 2003-07, 2008-12, 2013-17, 2018-22 and 2023-27 that list out the priority activities for the A&NI Administration in each. The main thrust is on opening more islands for tourism; obtaining relaxation in restrictions like the CRZ and RAP, improving transport facilities especially the inter-island shipping services, implementing MoT – WTO -UNDP plan, developing newer products like water sports complexes and investing in promoting the Islands internationally. An important document is the *Development Strategy for Environmentally Sustainable Tourism in the Andamans*, April 1997, which was undertaken by the MoT and WTO, along with UNDP, for developing a long-term Master Plan for environmentally sustainable tourism in Andamans. As part of its output, the report has a tourism development strategy for the Islands that includes

spatial planning and zoning recommendations and proposed institutional arrangement for tourism development. In response to concerns from the MoEF on the possible environmental impacts of the MoT-WTO Master Plan, the MoT requested an independent research institute NEERI to undertake a Carrying Capacity Study of the Master Plan. The NEERI report concluded that implementation of Master Tourism Plan would streamline the unplanned tourism activities and provide better facilities to tourists and not developing tourism as per the Master Plan does not offer any environmental benefits, rather haphazard tourism activities in the absence of the Master Tourism Plan will result in environmental degradation.

Other plans that need to be mentioned are the *Perspective Plan for Tourism Development in Andaman & Nicobar Islands: Draft Report, MoT, May 2002* prepared by consultants A F Fergusson and Co and a *FICCI Study on Andaman and Nicobar, an Emerging World Class Tourist Destination for the New Millennium, 2002*.

A comparative analysis of all these plans indicates that their thrust is on promoting "high value" tourism in the Islands and demanding the opening up of more islands in the Andamans for tourism. Improvement in connectivity, a demand for direct international connectivity, infrastructure support, product development and aggressive promotion of the Islands that focusses primarily on the foreign tourists are the other focus areas of these plans. We note that while all reports talk of the Islands' carrying capacity constraints and the need for promoting sustainable tourism, parameters of sustainability and the need for regulation of tourism and restriction of tourist numbers do not get addressed in several of the reports. The significant lacunae in all these policies are the non-recognition of factors like awareness building among tourists on social and environmental issues; impacts of tourism on women, children and indigenous tribes; local participation in tourism development; the regulation of tourism; and revenue generation through taxation of tourism industry. This reflects an clear bias towards promoting a model of tourism that does not integrate participatory and sustainability criteria and ensuring equitable benefits to local people..

Impacts of tourism in the Andaman Islands

a. Socio-Cultural Impacts -

How the local community in the Andamans perceives and experiences the social and cultural impacts of tourism is linked to the vulnerabilities they

experience of being a 'transplanted' and 'settled' people. Secondly, at what stage of the tourism development lifecycle a destination is, is relevant when we are assessing impacts, especially of a social nature as this will have a bearing on the visitor –visited relationship.

Tourist – local community relationships - In the Andamans, the interaction of the foreign tourists with the local community is relatively higher than in the case of domestic tourists. During interactions with the community it was learnt that foreign tourists learn about the place, people from those local community people working in resorts, and also through local fishermen, vendors at the bazaar and shopkeepers. This is in tune with findings of the primary survey, which revealed that a substantial percentage of foreign tourists (44%) and a slightly lower percentage of the domestic tourists (30%) believed their holiday had given them a sense of local culture, place and people of Andamans. An adaptation of Doxey's Tourism Irritation Index (Irridex), to ascertain the varying degrees of acceptance or irritation that a community goes through with the onset of tourism, in the case of the Andamans, reveals that the local community's responses towards tourism and tourists seem to be at the (early)stage of *euphoria* moving towards *apathy* and *irritation* in some Islands like Havelock and Neil, which see more tourism..

Tourism and Social change - Research on tourism has generally shown that as long as the numbers of tourists and their levels of impact remain below this critical level, and economic impacts continue to be positive, the presence of tourists in destination areas is usually accepted and welcomed by majority of the local population. Our survey revealed that most local community representatives have slight acceptance of and support to tourism activity with few community members expressing feelings of opposition to tourist activity, and fewer were into aggressive promotion of tourism. In the Andamans, two issues typify situations that lead to resentment against tourism and tourists in general. The first is the perceived rise in prices of essential goods and vegetables in popular tourist islands during certain parts of the year which the community attributes to rising tourism and demands for hotels & resorts. The second is the reduced availability of boat tickets to local residents between popular sectors like Port Blair – Havelock, where demand shoots up in peak foreign tourist season. Both these issues highlight cases of social impacts that are directly an outcome to the changing tourist: local population ratio in the destination which is an important criterion determining the extent and severity of socio-cultural impacts of tourism experienced by local communities.

The introduction of foreign ideologies and ways of life into societies that have not been exposed to tourist lifestyles might actually lead to changes in the internal structure of the local community, through changes in the roles of women, in community cohesion, in demographic structure and in institutional structures and relationships.

In Andamans, incidents of local residents voicing dissent against scantily dressed foreign tourists have come to light. The local residents say they do not visit places frequented by foreign tourists who are often clad in very skimpy clothing, thus restricting their movement. The tourists who earlier restricted themselves to the beach areas are now entering community spaces like local markets more often. The tourists' perspective on this issue is reflected through the results of our primary survey where a significant percentage of both foreign (26.9%) and domestic (11.3%) tourists mentioned that they had come across nudity on the beaches. The secondary impacts of the demonstration effect have also become visible in Islands like Havelock and Neil. Attitudinal differences towards tourism are palpable between members of different generations with the elders cautioning the youth from getting too involved in tourism and neglecting traditional occupations like cultivation.

On the positive side, tourism has also provided opportunities for women to engage in the economy, even though it may be through setting up petty shops or selling fish, fruits, or through formation of self help group linked micro-enterprise.

Tourism and exploitation – The links between tourism and the exploitation of children in the form of sexual exploitation, trafficking and child labour is unfortunately quite established in many developing country tourism destinations. In the Islands however, there were no reports of child sexual exploitation in relation to tourism. Neither was child labour very evident in the hotel and tourism sector but this cannot be ruled out in connection with children of recent migrants. Field interviews indicated that children are now dropping out of school to take up small jobs in the tourism sector and there is a need to closely monitor this.

Also, there were no reports or evidence that directly linked tourism to prostitution. They were, however, fears expressed by elders and women in the communities, on the possibility of rising prostitution in the Islands on account of tourism. On the issue of crime and its links to tourism, it is important to acknowledge that both local community members and tourists are at risk with increase in crime levels at tourist destinations. On the

whole, the Islands are perceived as a safe destination by majority of the tourists (96.5% of domestic and 90.7% of foreign tourists perceived the islands to be a safe destination). The few incidents of clashes between the tourists and the local community that have occurred are not so frequent as to cause alarm. The problem of drug abuse is reportedly rising in the Andamans, and if steps not taken to curb it, it could turn into a bane for both local community members and tourists.

Tourism and indigenous communities in the Andamans - as far as the impact of tourism on indigenous communities goes, the construction of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR), right through the Jarawa reserve has sealed their fate. The ATR, is today used to ply tourists from Port Blair in South Andaman to popular tourist spots in the Middle and North. The tour operators take tourists on this route, from Port Blair to Baratang, with the covert mission of spotting Jarawas, a fact that was corroborated by a survey with domestic tourists, 30% of whom said they were led to believe that they will see/interact with these tribes on these rides. However, the promotional material on tourism brought out by the A&NI Administration indicates a clear shift in attitude towards these primitive tribes, from an earlier stance of seeing them as part of the tourism product, to today clearly stating that while the Andamans are home to many primitive tribes, interaction with them is prohibited. Despite that, the tourists still expect to get a glimpse of the “naked tribe” as a part of their holiday package, and that needs to change. The A&NI Administration would do well to spread awareness among tourists on these indigenous communities. It must also ensure that tour operators strictly adhere to local regulatory norms that do not allow buses to stop on the ATR and thus ensure that tourism does not contribute to the further decline of these already endangered primitive people.

b. *Economic Impacts*

At the macro-economic level of the economy of the A&NI as a whole, data indicates that tourism currently does not play a significant role in the economy both in terms of its contribution to GSDP and employment. We further note that despite a significant increase in tourist arrivals over the last two decades, the extent to which these increased arrivals have contributed to the economy is not clear. This is reflected by the contribution of tourism to the GSDP of the Islands that has stagnated at approximately 8% for the last two decades. In fact, for few years when arrivals did increase by around 10%, per capita contribution of recorded tourism to GSDP has actually fallen, corroborating the previous point made. In terms of its

contribution to revenue generation, tourism contributes 1.47% to indirect tax collection, which is not significant. This low contribution could be as tourists are not purchasing local produce and as the avenues to tax tourism-related activities are very few. In relation to employment, recorded tourism employs less than 1.5% of the total main workforce of the Islands. We recognise that a substantial proportion of the workforce in tourism is of a marginal nature, subject to high degree of seasonality, especially in resorts and areas that are dependent on foreign tourist arrivals. This indicates that a substantial proportion of the existing workforce in tourism in the Islands does not receive secured income from this source throughout the year.

At the micro level, there is evidence of entrepreneurial initiative among the local community in the tourism sector that is reflected by the fact that more than 50% ownership of accommodation units within Port Blair and outside are in local hands. The lack of data on ownership of assets and revenue generated from tourism means that we cannot judge the relative significance of different types of ownership (i.e. within Port Blair, within the Island or from the mainland). A large percentage of accommodation establishments in the Andamans are small, individually owned units and the Government's share in the accommodation sector is quite low. Given that the proportion of owners belonging to the Islands vis-à-vis the Mainland, speaks about the degree of local benefit derived from tourism, it is encouraging to note that in Port Blair, almost 90 % of the accommodation is owned by people from within the town, with only a minor percentage belonging to businessmen from the Mainland. In other places, about half of the units are owned by locals from the Islands where the establishment is located and 27% are under the ownership of individuals from Port Blair. Interestingly, the percentage of establishments under the ownership of individuals/companies from the Mainland is double in accommodation establishments sector outside of Port Blair than within it.

In terms of employment opportunities for the local community in tourism, there is a case to be made that there is a tendency to employ disproportionately greater number of people from Port Blair and the mainland on jobs that required a certain level of technical or language skills. Employing from within the Island seems to be a feasible option for establishments that need more number of temporary workers on low-skill jobs during the peak foreign tourism season. There is evidence of typical gender bias and stereotyping in jobs in the accommodation sector – of women handling the cleaning and backroom and low paying jobs.

In terms of the purchases made from the local market, the data from the tourist survey reveals a discouraging picture as 35% of foreign tourists and 13% of domestic tourists stated that they did not purchase anything at all while on their holiday in the Islands and further, from among those who did make purchase, the percentage who purchased locally-made or procured items is even lesser. Overall, purchases from local markets do not currently seem to account for high tourist expenditure and an important reason for this is that few options of purchases that are available to tourists currently.

Lastly, the existing linkages between tourism activities and the local primary economy are weak. Apart from the backward linkages, currently, the supply chain linkage of sourcing primary produce required by tourism is also weak. There are many products that are not available locally and are sourced from the mainland, and of the ones that are available within the Islands, are not sourced on a sustained basis either due to problems with quality, quantity or the regularity of supply from the local market. In case of sea food, some hotel owners said that since sea food sourced from the Islands is expensive, they rather ship it in from the mainland. These are problems faced by the industry that need the attention of the Administration if linkages to the local primary economy are to be strengthened.

c. Environmental Impacts -

Environmental issues of Andaman Islands: impacts of development - Conservation of island ecosystems is paramount because not only does a large proportion of the people depend on them for livelihood, but because they also harbour half of the tropical marine biodiversity of the world. Development has taken its toll on the fragile ecosystem of the Andamans. The Islands are faced with declining forests area and loss of biodiversity due to increase in encroachments, conversion of forest land into agriculture and monoculture plantations and uncontrolled immigration into the Islands. Sand extracted for construction has led to loss of marine turtle beaches and erosion by sea action. Further, the coral reefs of the islands are under threat from siltation, sand mining, agricultural runoff and damage due to fishing, tourism and construction activities. The collection of shells and sea cucumbers for commercial purposes has led to their drastic decline. The impact and growth of tourism in the Islands needs to be contextualised in the light of these environmental issues.

Guidelines and regulations with specific reference to the environment and tourism - The CRZ Notification,

issued in 1991, is the most significant and specialised legislative guidelines regulating anthropogenic activities along the coast. It empowers the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) with substantial power to take action “*for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the environment and preventing, controlling and abating environmental pollution*”. It seeks to lay down rules for siting activities, to ensure that the rights of traditional fishing and coastal communities over certain areas are not compromised to meet increasing requirements of a burgeoning tourism industry. Further, it defines the nature of activities to be regulated or restricted, and identifies different ecological sensitivities of areas that need varying levels of protection. Progressive as the Notification is, there are serious issues with regards to its implementation, as these environmental legislations were considered as constraints for tourism development and removal and relaxation of these restrictions was suggested.

In the absence of a fully approved Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) for the A&NI since the initiation of the CRZ Notification in 1991, the MoEF initiated a parallel process of drafting an **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (ICZM)**. Disregarding the fact that the ICZMP is yet to be completed, finalised and discussed with various civil society groups, the MoEF amended the CRZ Notification in 2003 to state that based on the findings of the ICZMP, in identified areas of 13 islands which are part of the ICZMP process, the NDZ can be reduced from 200 m to 50 m for tourism development. That the CRZ Notification has not been implemented in the Andamans is evident from the number of establishments, including tourism, that have come up and that are coming up in the coastal areas in clear violation of the regulations. Even the Building bye-laws issued by the Port Blair Municipal Corporation do not appear to have been implemented. Many of the orders of the Supreme Court, based on the Shekhar Singh Commission (2001), that was constituted to look at ecological threats in the A&NI, are yet to see the light of day. For instance, despite recommendations, the ATR still operates, sand mining continues, permanent structures have been allowed to come up and no tourism plan has been drawn up. Thus, while the regulations are quite clear and explicit, what is of great concern is that establishment of tourism infrastructure continues unabated and laws and guidelines are violated with impunity.

Current status of environmental impacts of tourism in the Andamans - tourism in the Andamans is largely unregulated and unplanned. This is evident from the

fairly large number of hotels, resorts, lodges, guest houses and holiday homes that have sprung all over the Andamans in a way in which there seems to be little coherence or sensitivity to its fragile ecology. Despite the CRZ Notification, 1991, tourism establishments that are beyond the prescribed limits of 200 or 500 metres from the high tide line are almost impossible to find and there are violations galore by tourism related activities in Port Blair, Wandoor, Havelock and Neil Island. All resorts in Havelock and on Neil Island, including the Dolphin Resort owned by IP&T which is a permanent structure, are in violation of the CRZ Notification. Tourism in protected areas of Andamans has been better regulated as compared to protected areas on the mainland but tourism is prevalent in protected areas like the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park, Wandoor, especially in the islands of Redskin and Jolly Buoy. Encroachment of forest land by the tourism industry has not been recorded, and neither was it observed in the islands that were covered in the research. The forests used by the Department of Environment & Forests for tourism activities are both tropical forests as well as mangroves. It has been reported that the corals, mangroves and forests are threatened by tourism.

The tourism industry uses different kinds of materials for construction, expansion, renovation and repair of its facilities. While majority of tourism establishments in Port Blair have been constructed with brick and cement, in popular tourism places like Havelock, Neil and Long Island, the construction is predominantly using bamboo, timber, thatch and tin. The Supreme Court has permitted use of timber felled according to the reworked working plans for use by local purposes. Therefore, it is possible for the tourism industry to procure timber for construction. This will help in doing away with the need for concrete based constructions and the consequent undue pressure on coastal ecosystems for sand that has led to various problems discussed above. Further, the use of materials like bamboo, thatch and timber rather than concrete, steel and brick, that are semi-permanent or temporary in their construction, will cut electricity usage. This is especially important since electricity in Andamans is generated by burning diesel.

Freshwater is a precious commodity in the whole of Andamans and despite the islands receiving rainfall of an average of about 3000 mm per year there are severe shortages faced especially in the summer months of March and April, when water from rainfall decreases. Since the geology of the islands does not permit groundwater storage, and since vegetation cover facilitates this availability, it becomes an

important factor for the availability of freshwater. Port Blair and Havelock are at a serious risk in terms of availability of water. To meet the growing demands for freshwater, the Municipal Council is considering sources from other places, and proposals have also been prepared for the same. In this light, the hospitality sector of Andamans has been implicated as the single largest sector that is competing with Port Blair residents in the demand for freshwater. In Port Blair, the figure for 47 hotels, when extrapolated, is double the domestic consumption, on a conservative estimate. The tourism sector is a substantial consumer of available freshwater, and this volume is only bound to increase with the increasing number of tourism establishments in Port Blair and other Andaman Islands.

Wastes, both solid and liquid, are a serious environmental threat to the Islands' ecosystems. With uncontrolled proliferation and use of non-biodegradable objects, in the face of improper or almost non-existent solid waste disposal systems in the Andaman Islands, has led to proliferation of solid wastes in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Port Blair has the highest per capita waste generation rate of 0.76 kg/capita/day in the country. The main areas where tourism occurs are the worst affected. Large scale proliferation of non-biodegradable wastes was observed in all islands and locations where tourists visit. In many cases like Redskin, Jollybuoy, Ross and North Bay, the situation is "tackled" by burning off all the wastes but in many places like Havelock, Wandoor, Chidiyatapu and Corbyn's Cove large amounts of wastes can be seen openly dumped. In all these areas, the panchayats informed that the responsibility of cleaning up wastes eventually fell on them. The problem of throwing wastes like carrybags, wrappers of all shapes and sizes (of consumables like wafers, chocolates, chewing tobacco etc) and plastic bottles is also seen from boats that ply in between the islands. In tourism establishments, the methods adopted for disposal of solid wastes vary from open dumping, landfill, open burning and handing over wastes to municipal treatment facility, which again is either open dumping or disposal in landfills. Almost every stakeholder is aware of this problem, but nothing serious has been done so far to tackle the problem. The next problem after solid wastes is the disposal of sewage. Again, the quantity of sewage generated in places like Port Blair, Rangat and Diglipur, that require sewage treatment facilities by virtue of their current population and its growth, has not been undertaken or at least the data was not available during the study period.

The chief modes of transport used by tourists to visit the Islands and the consequent impacts of these on the environment also need to be studied. The tourist's preference of the air over the sea as the means of getting to A&NI has led to an increase in the number of incoming flights from 4 to 11 from the mainland to Port Blair, while the number of ships has almost remained constant. Many air routes have been initiated and are sustained by the demands of growing business and leisure markets. Developing countries in particular rely on aviation-led tourism.

Air transport is estimated to contribute about 40 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions from tourism sector including the domestic segment, which is much larger than international. In various tourism development plans for the Andamans, the need to improve air connectivity to the islands has been a repeated theme. Furthermore, promoting increase in connectivity with no heed to the attendant climate change impacts on these Islands is a short sighted strategy.

A whole range of direct and supporting activities that are undertaken as part of tourism also impact the environment of the Islands in different ways. Take for instance the boats that ferry tourists to various tourist locations in the Andamans that invariably end up spilling oil and diesel into the sea. While the problem may not be very serious today, increased number of boats would have an adverse impact on the marine ecosystems mainly from leakage of oil, grease and dumping of sewage. In several areas, corals have been damaged by dropping of anchors and in shallow areas, breakage and abrasion of corals has occurred due to abrasion with propellers or hulls of boats. It has also been reported that use of beaches by tourists for camping and camp-fires has resulted in disturbances to turtle nesting sites, sometimes even preventing their nesting. Coastal ecosystems are affected by trampling of vegetation by tourists leading to onset of soil erosion and disturbance to wildlife, sometimes displacing coastal floral and faunal species. Activities like snorkelling and diving that have are a special attraction to certain category of tourists visiting the Islands, also account for ecological damage to coral reefs.

All in all, the absence of a coherent strategy, despite numerous plans, which would protect the ecosystems and at the same time allow for soft-impact tourism, continues to add to the ever-increasing environmental woes of Andamans. Complemented by lack of vision and thinking on bringing in an appropriate kind of tourism and tourist activity that would be beneficial for the Island ecology only complicate matters further.

There is a need for very comprehensive education and awareness programmes for the islands. There also need for better interpretation material for educating tourists. The issue of inadequate implementation of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification is a major cause for concern. The Administration, specifically the Coastal Zone Management Authority, has not done enough to regulate tourism establishments in coastal areas of Havelock, Neil and other islands. Nor is it addressing the springing up of such establishments in other areas like Neil Island. While these establishments cannot be regularised, the Coastal Zone Management Authority has not acted while these structures were coming up. As has been seen in other tourism locations; once a location gets degraded and loses its charm, tourism moves to another one; the same phenomenon may repeat itself in many areas of Andamans.

d. Tourism and lack of institutional coordination in Andamans

The current direction and pace of tourism in the Islands is largely determined by the Central Government and routed through the Department of Information, Publicity & Tourism (IP&T), leaving the local governing bodies out of the decision making process and involvement in subsequent phases of tourism development. The various departments directly involved in tourism projects are fraught with the problem of lack of dialogue and coordination. With regard to the role of institutions of local self government and tourism, the devolution of powers largely remains on paper. Even though, the IP&T seeks compliance with other departments and the panchayats for its needs on several fronts, PRIs do not get separate funds for activities related to tourism issues. Even the Port Blair Municipal Council has been reduced to a licensing authority for all new constructions, tourism or otherwise. Despite tourism being a cross-cutting issue that touches upon socio-economic, cultural and environmental aspects of collective life and such rights existing with PRIs, no attempt seems to have been made so far to create a space for dialogues between the panchayats and the bureaucracy. Decisions on tourism projects are taken largely by the Administration or Central Government without consulting local bodies, like in the case of the panchayats, who only get to know about a certain project when they are approached for a No Objection Certificate, after all clearances have been given by various other departments. Although the panchayats have the authority to regulate or even say no to tourism in their areas of jurisdiction, no panchayat has said no to

tourism so far because they see the benefits it can bring. But they are aware of the problems that unplanned and unregulated tourism will bring in and thus want a level of tourism that will be acceptable to all. Given this scenario, there is not only a need for decentralisation of power and a participatory approach to tourism development, but also allocation of more funds to the panchayats. The involvement of local self government bodies in all stages of tourism development — conceptualisation, decision making, planning and scoping, implementation, development and marketing, and economic sustainability — is an imperative. The need for elected representatives to acquaint themselves with laws, rules and entitlements is also a critical factor.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations presented below as part of this report that emerge from the research findings (in terms of concerns and perspectives) as well as takes into account the context and opportunities that present themselves in terms of tourism development. While the recommendations focus on tourism, its development and benefits, the larger question of whether tourism is necessarily the best option in term of development in the Islands is a more fundamental one and would need a window much wider than that provided by this research study. Our recommendations fall into three broad categories:

Section A: **Developing a clear vision and strategies for tourism** – ensuring policy reflects elements of sustainability, responsibility in tourism, people centeredness and equity in the way tourism is envisioned, policy and plans that reflect this vision and strategies that will ensure its implementation; governance and coordination, strengthening role of local elected governing bodies in tourism, building capacities and skills of people to participate and to engage in tourism.

Section B: **Destination competitiveness** - positioning tourism in the Islands, building appropriate products and brands, ensuring a reliable base of information on which tourism plans are made and implemented, tourism linked infrastructure and connectivity.

Section C: **Destination Sustainability** - managing and minimising negative impacts (socio-cultural, economic and environmental), tourist local community interface, sustainable tourism practices, regulations and guidelines, innovative practices and processes, and awareness building.

A. Developing a clear vision for tourism

1. Visioning and Strategic Planning exercise leading to tourism Policy and Plans

- We recommend that the A& NI Administration and MoT supports a detailed and participatory visioning and strategising exercise that takes into account the perspectives and needs of different stakeholders and allows varying and even conflicting interests to come into play.
- To supplement such strategic exercises, detailed technical studies need to be undertaken on carrying capacity, tourism penetration index, impact assessments and / or limits of acceptable change. These cannot just be commissioned studies (focussing only on a promotion and growth agenda) but need to be designed to take into account the whole range of needs, capacities, opportunities, constraints and aspirations of all stakeholders
- A comprehensive tourism vision document and a tourism policy should be and the final outcome of this process.
- This comprehensive visioning and strategic planning exercise should be prioritised and privileged as a critical step prior to announcing/approving any further policy/scheme given that the adverse impacts of unplanned and unregulated tourism on the Islands are evident.

2. Government and Coordination

- The A&NI Administration must ensure a regulatory role in addition to being a facilitator of tourism. Aspects of regulation must include-
- Assessment of the number of tourists into the Islands, using carrying capacity and tourism penetration indices, to understand these “limits”.
- Development of tools to assess tourism impacts.
- The opening up of more areas within the Islands for tourism is an aspect that calls for regulation, since research points to the fact that current forms of tourism in the Islands do not create strong links between tourist numbers and sustainable local benefits.
- Another important regulatory role is balancing between local residents’ needs and the needs of tourism – particularly to access to resources, services and facilities. Lack of foresight and sensitivity to this can lead to tensions, conflicts and antagonism.

3. Strengthening role of local governing bodies in tourism

- The ability of local communities to engage with the representatives and negotiate power structures and dynamics is a crucial factor for tourism to be more reflective of their aspirations and interests and take cognisance of their rights and responsibilities. Their capacities for the same also need to be built.
- The panchayats need to engage in the design and implementation of tourism more directly. In turn this would mean being more aware of the pluses and minuses in the context of tourism in the Andamans and base policies on data and ground realities, not only rhetoric.
- The demand from all levels of local elected governing bodies is for the strengthening of their roles in regulating, authorising, monitoring and promoting tourism in areas within their jurisdiction. The A&NI Administration needs to factor this into their approach to tourism by engaging with these bodies and providing them with institutional and financial support, and capacity building. Panchayats should also consider revenue generation through levy of taxes to support tourism related facilities, services and infrastructure.

4. People's participation: building capacities and skills to engage in tourism

- Areas where capacity building of local community could be enhanced are in the management of tourism enterprises, tourist-community interface, business and entrepreneurial skills, handicrafts and running micro-enterprises.
- Capacity building and training opportunities, including language training, need to be provided by the A&NI Administration and the industry, to the local community, especially youth and women.

B. Destination Competitiveness

5. Positioning tourism in the Islands

- The MoT needs to study its own return on investment on promotion through its *Incredible India* campaign by considering the fact that 85% of foreign tourists have learnt of the Islands from the Internet or word of mouth whereas among domestic tourists, television, newspapers and magazines have been the main sources of relevant information.

- Tourism promotion in Andamans should target both domestic and foreign tourists who meet the criteria of being sensitive to the ecological fragility of Andamans and willing to contribute to the local economy, such that those coming to visit realise that they are privileged to be visitors. Tourism infrastructure and policies need to consistently align to such a positioning. The manner in which the Islands are promoted and visitor awareness must gear itself to wean out tourists who do not appreciate these core aspects of the Islands.

6. *Ensuring a reliable base of information on which tourism plans are made and implemented*

- A system for regular collection, publishing and analysis of tourism statistics needs to be put in place. This should include critical indicators like revenues from tourism, number of people directly and indirectly employed in the sector, occupancy rates in accommodation units and profits of tourist business.
- Registration of establishments, and collection of data from tourism establishments to corroborate official data must be done. The A&NI Administration has passed the Andaman & Nicobar Islands Registration of Tourism Trade Regulations, 2007 in this regard, which will provide useful inputs in this regard.
- A meticulous process of collecting accurate domestic tourist numbers needs to be put in place. While the statistics of foreign tourist arrivals are fairly accurate, the discrepancies in tabulation need to be rectified.
- As per the recommendations of the Working Group on Tourism Report to the Planning commission for the XI Five Year Plan, the Administration needs to use data from ongoing assessments of tourism impacts in specific locations that currently witness large number of tourist influx and tourism activity.

7. *Tourism infrastructure*

- Tourism infrastructure, particularly accommodation, should be encouraged to be eco-friendly, with careful use of locally available materials. Incentives for the same need to be given. At the same time, the use of local material must be regulated to ensure that these are not being consumed unsustainably.
- The industry should voluntarily adhere to creation of non-permanent infrastructure using minimum amount of locally available materials

and avoid energy intensive high ecological footprint material. If awareness schemes have little impact, the prospect of stringent regulation should be resorted to.

- The plans of making the Islands part of a cruise tourism circuit in the country need to be reconsidered—from economic, environmental and social angles – in the light of weak trickle down effects to locals experienced in other popular cruise destinations. Large numbers of tourists for a short duration will only have implications on the carrying capacity of the location..
- Tourism infrastructure like water sport complexes, amusement parks, golf courses should be most definitely disallowed in the Islands.

8. Connectivity to the Islands and inter-island connectivity

- Inter-island air travel through helicopters needs to be retained at the minimal level and prioritised for emergency needs of the local population.
- Till such time the visioning and strategising exercise, policy and carrying capacity studies are undertaken, expansion of the airport in terms of allowing more flights to operate needs to be put on hold.
- The proposal to separate facilities and /or ration facilities between local people and tourists needs to be given serious consideration. Dual pricing policy for tourists and Islanders needs to be retained and extended to all Islands apart from Havelock as is currently the case. The proposed opening up of the inter-island shipping sector to private players needs further thought and debate with necessary stakeholders.

C. Destination Sustainability

9. Managing and minimising negative impacts (socio-cultural, economic and environmental)

Socio Cultural Impacts

- Regulation and monitoring of tourist activities on beaches needs to be done and punitive action taken against both tourists and locals who are engaged in drug abuse or sexual exploitation.
- With the increase in migrant labour especially engaged in construction the vulnerability of these children to child labour is a possibility.

Unless authorities are vigilant, the incidence of child labour might increase.

- Tour Operators need in particular to make special efforts to increase public awareness on not to look out for or interact with primitive tribal groups. The Administration should step in to firmly rein in tour operators who continue publicising Jarawa tourism.
- The A&NI Administration, local self government authorities and the industry should take efforts to help tourists understand that their way of dressing, activities and behaviour need to be sensitive to the local cultural norms and ethos.

Economic Impacts

- Considering that the degree of local benefit derived from tourism activities has strong links to the ownership pattern, the Administration and the Central Government should consciously take steps to improve local entrepreneurship and ownership. This can be achieved through speedy access to soft loans and credit for those locals, who are keen on venturing into the tourism, but do not have collateral.
- Another important measure for the Administration to consider would be the creative use of information technology like website and the internet to ensure that small operations get visibility and are able to attract tourists. Interpretation centres and facilities for online booking would help smaller community owned tourism establishments to run tourism business more effectively.
- To ensure strong backward and forward linkages, the Administration, in consultation with institutions of local self governance, could identify those raw materials that are available locally in sufficient measure, over and above the regular requirements of the local Islander community, and encourage their use by tourism businesses like resorts and hotels. The A&NI Administration and panchayats could consider making local sourcing of some raw material mandatory.
- There are many stakeholders and sections of the A&NI Administration who hope that tourism will become the pillar of the Islands' economy. A more sound economic analysis of the current and likely economic impact of tourism, and taking cognisance of the high degrees of vulnerability is necessary before such views are nurtured.

- Efforts need to be taken to strengthen the other sectors like fisheries in a sustainable manner.
- The Administration can, through taxes, ensure that benefits accruing from growth in tourism are equitably distributed in the Islands, both regionally and across sections of people.

Environmental Impacts

- A strategy for water conservation and water management systems needs to be prepared. While regulating the growing number of tourism establishments, subsidies to small and medium enterprises in tourism, on investments in environmental management systems like solar, water harvesting, sewage and solid waste management may be considered.
- Land acquisition for tourism resorts needs to be studied and monitored and the panchayats need to have a say in allotment of revenue land for tourism purposes. Imposing a moratorium on further expansion of tourism till such time when the vision, strategies and policy making steps are taken, is an option.
- The tourism industry in the Andamans needs to be move to sound environmental practices. Limiting Use of air-conditioners, care in use of water, use of CFL lighting, sensible water management practices and waste management and recycling need to be high on the agenda as the preservation of the Andaman ecology is in the industry's interest.
- To meet shortage of water for local consumption, in accordance with building bye laws, rain water harvesting should be ensured for all establishments, especially tourism establishments.
- Reverse osmosis plants (that convert hardwater to potable water) need to be repaired and put into use.
- Water based amusement theme parks, which are water guzzlers, and which do not fit into the positioning of the Islands as a place of natural beauty, should be simply prohibited.
- A waste management and garbage disposal strategy for the entire Islands needs to be worked out. Segregation of wastes and recycling are important options. The zero-waste concept may also be adopted. The ban on polythene bags, which is yet to be notified should be effected immediately.
- Extended Producer Responsibility for all kinds of consumables should be considered as an option, particularly for products linked to tourism
- The current state of affairs on sewage treatment by direct dumping of untreated sewage into the sea must be stopped. Treatment of sewage must be made mandatory for all establishments..
- Dependency on generation of electricity through burning of diesel needs to be reduced in a phased manner. Renewable, non-polluting sources of energy generation need to be explored and tapped.
- Boat anchors should not be dropped on the sea-bed but dedicated anchor-buoys. Discharge of sewage from boats directly into the sea should be checked. The use of bio-toilets on boats should be considered.
- Turtle nesting beaches should be avoided for intensive tourism development.
- Coral reefs are an important ecological heritage of the Islands and these should not be destroyed by tourism. The Administration should consider taking steps such as closing certain over-visited areas like North Bay to allow corals to rejuvenate; regular monitoring and checking repeatedly for signs of damage like those at Elephant Bay, Mahuadera (South Andaman) and Smith & Ross Islands (North Andamans). Training of guides to ensure compliance by them and tourists is important. Educating tourists on collection of shells and corals, and stringent checks at airports and harbour for returning tourists needs to be done.

10. Regulations and Guidelines

The Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991 has been poorly implemented in the Andamans. Tourism establishments continue to violate provisions of the CRZ Notification. Basic processes of the CRZ Notification like demarcation of the High Tide Line, preparation of Coastal Zone Management Plans and maps have not been done. To top it all, the No Development Zone has been reduced from 200m to 50m for tourism in Andamans. Even this has been violated with impunity.

- We recommend that the CRZ Notification, 1991 is implemented with all seriousness. Project clearance guidelines for all projects, including tourism projects need to be formulated. Demarcation of the HTL needs to be done at the earliest. The new maps and plans should also be widely distributed and made available

at important offices for public examination at all times and also posted on the official websites.

- The dilution of the CRZ Notification, that allows only tourism projects from 50m onwards of HTL, should be revoked by the MoEF.
- Rampant CRZ violations such as constructions and activities, should be dealt with sternly and decisively.
- The new EIA Notification of 2006 excluded tourism projects all over the country from requiring EIA clearance. Given the particular ecological vulnerability of the Islands, the need to make EIA clearance mandatory with more stringent criteria for all tourism establishments is critical.
- The MoEF has approved *Environment Guidelines for Tourism Projects in the Andaman Islands* that provide useful environmental guidance for individual tourism projects. These are progressive and the A&NI Administration needs to ensure that these are adhered to stringently.
- The Andaman & Nicobar Islands Registration of Tourism Trade Regulations, 2007 is also a progressive instrument that should be implemented strictly to ensure quality of the tourism brand.

11. Innovative practices and processes

The context of Andamans is unique and facing the challenges posed requires creative, out-of-the-box thinking for finding solutions. Innovations will help build a sustainable tourism brand, which could be its unique selling proposition that will attract those tourists who are serious about experiencing the natural and cultural heritage. The tourism industry will thus stand to benefit in the long term. Several national and international guidelines could be referred to wherein attempts by communities to arrive at vision and principles of tourism development are reflected in the form of charters and codes. There are inspiring examples of people's charters on tourism from other states in India.

- The tourism industry needs to be encouraged to recognise that they stand to benefit from long term economic sustainability if it minimises the negative impacts and maximises positive impact of tourism. In this regard, there is a need to hold awareness and sensitisation campaigns.
- Personnel, who are presently engaged as guides need to be specially trained on the sensitive aspects of Andamans' ecology, indigenous peoples, local communities and also the rich historical heritage of the Andamans.
- The print and electronic media – both local and from the mainland – needs to exercise caution and discretion in the way in which Andamans are portrayed.
- Education of both the local population and tourists about the fragility of the islands and compliance on aspects like waste disposal is also important.
- The interpretation centre needs to be made an integral part of the tourism activity in Andamans with tourists encouraged to make it as part of their tourist itinerary. There is a need to produce more quality, innovative and creative awareness and education material.
- The Department of Environment & Forests may also consider organising nature camps and awareness campaigns for various groups ranging from school and college students, local community peoples, tourists and others.

The Andaman & Nicobar Islands are the earth's natural and cultural heritage. Unplanned, thoughtless and unregulated tourism development in the Andamans is threatening to put this heritage at serious risk. It is time that the A&NI Administration, the inhabitants of this beautiful archipelago of Islands, and the Ministry of Tourism took bold and decisive steps and demonstrated leadership to prevent this from happening. It is time to rethink tourism in the Andamans.

Brief Profile of Collaborating Organisations

EQUATIONS (Equitable Tourism Options)

EQUATIONS is a research and policy advocacy organization (non-profit society) working on tourism and development issues in India. Its work has focused on women and tourism, the child and tourism, ecosystems, communities and tourism, and globalization impacts. EQUATIONS works closely, networking with organisations and communities, to influence people centered forms of tourism that ensure significant local benefits and take into account the negative impacts of an unbridled growth of tourism.

INTACH, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Chapter

The Indian National Trust for Art, Cultural and Heritage (INTACH) is a nationwide, non-profit membership organization. INTACH was set up in 1984 with the mission to protect and conserve India's vast natural and cultural heritage. The Andaman & Nicobar Islands chapter of INTACH has been actively engaged in preserving the cultural heritage of the Islands.

Society for Andaman and Nicobar Ecology

SANE has been working since 1986 on issues of ecology and indigenous communities of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. SANE has been involved in several important research studies on coral reefs, people's strategy on biodiversity conservation, role of NGOs and impact of development on the Jarawas and other indigenous people. SANE has also been instrumental in moving several landmark PILs, some jointly with other likeminded organizations that have resulted in the protection of ecological sustainability and indigenous peoples' rights in the Islands.

Kalpavriksh

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP

Kalpavriksh is a Non-Governmental Organisation working on environmental education, research,

campaigns, and direct action. It began in 1979, with a campaign led by students to save Delhi's Ridge Forest area from encroachments and destruction. Starting with these roots in local action, Kalpavriksh has moved on to work on a number of local, national and global issues. It is based in Delhi and Pune.

Tata Institute for Social Sciences

Tata Institute of Social Sciences is a well known institute for post graduate studies in the areas of development and social work. It also works on the promotion of sustainable, equitable and participatory development, social welfare and social justice. In the Andamans the institute has been involved in relief work post tsunami in Katchal Island, following which it carried out assessment of resources and livelihoods affected by the natural disaster in Car Nicobar, Nancowry Group of Islands and Katchal Island.

ActionAid International India

ActionAid International an international development agency that is presently working in 43 countries to fight poverty and injustice. ActionAid India setup in 1972 works with marginalized sections of the rural and urban poor.

In the aftermath of the Tsunami (2004), ActionAid started its emergencies work in five countries – India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Thailand and Somalia. In India, intensive work was carried out in A&N Islands, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. ActionAid's National Tsunami Response Programme in A&N Islands started in January 2005 and wound up in December 2008. The coverage area included the three districts of the Islands with a direct coverage of over 10,000 households, and an indirect coverage of all the people residing in the far flung islands through varied advocacy initiatives as well as addressing issues related to their lives and livelihoods.

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